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Tongsun Park to Testify on Hill Today

By T. R. Reid
Washington Post Staff Writer

Nearly one year after their inquiry began, House investigators probing Congress' Korean connection will finally get their chance today to question Tongsun Park, the elusive South Korean who allegedly played a central role in his country's effort to buy influence in the U.S. government.

Park, a Washington-based socialite who traveled to London and then to Seoul while he was sought by federal investigators, returned here last weekend under terms of a deal he negotiated with the Justice Department: if he testifies truthfully about the influence-buying scheme, he will be spared prosecution on bribery and conspiracy charges against him.

Park will testify in secret session today before members of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Leon Jaworski, the committee's special counsel, has estimated that the committee would question Park for about two weeks.

Then Park will face further closed sessions with investigators from the Senate Ethics Committee, which is conducting a separate probe of the Korean affair.

Park is also scheduled to testify at

the trial of his friend and former business partner, Richard T. Hanna, a former Democratic congressman from California who has been indicted on charges of bribery and conspiracy in the Korean case. Hanna's trial is scheduled to open March 20.

Finally, Park is expected to testify in open hearings before the House committee. That should begin in about two months.

If Park's testimony in the secret sessions reflects public statements he has made in a series of interviews, House investigators will hear that he is an innocent victim of overzealous reporters and federal prosecutors.

Park has scoffed at charges that he acted as an agent of the South Korean intelligence service in distributing hundreds of thousands of dollars to members of Congress to win their support for the government of South Korean President Park Chung Hee.

In an interview yesterday on the ABC-TV program "Good Morning America," Park stated that he never worked for the Seoul government. He said he gave some political contributions to his friends in Congress "to help the American political system in my own way." The contributions only

went to congressmen who personally asked him for help, Park said.

Those statements conflict with evidence brought forth last year in public hearings before the House standards panel.

In those hearings, a former chief of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency said that Park personally visited the agency's headquarters in Seoul to nominate himself as an agent who could "help Korea's cause" in Washington.

Witnesses at the hearings said that the KCIA had a code name for Park's activities, "Operation Ice Mountain."

The Washington Post recently revealed correspondence in which a South Korean ambassador asked an American firm doing business with Seoul to help pay for Park's lobbying efforts in Washington.

A report in today's editions of the Los Angeles Times also suggests that Park was a secret agent of the Seoul government. The Times reveals that Hanna, while still in Congress, wrote to the South Korean president praising Tongsun Park's work as an "agent" and a "representative" of the Seoul regime.

The investigators may also find that Park's testimony about the amounts of money he distributed on Capitol

Hill conflicts with previous evidence about his activities.

In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Park said that his political contributions total about \$300,000, not counting sums he passed to Hanna in their business dealings.

But the House committee's investigators found that Park had earned about \$9 million in commissions from American rice sales to South Korea. Witnesses at the hearings said Park told the South Korean government he would use his commission earnings to win friends for Seoul in Congress.

Park is staying at a secret "safe house" in the Washington area under the watch of U.S. marshals. He appeared in public briefly yesterday when he was arraigned at the U.S. courthouse here on a 36-count indictment charging him with involvement in the Korean influence-buying scheme.

He pleaded innocent to the charges. Judge June Green scheduled an initial conference in the case for May 31. By then, Park's congressional testimony may be completed. If the Justice Department is satisfied that he has testified truthfully in Congress and at Hanna's trial, it will move to drop the charges in accordance with its agreement with Park.

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